

Nueces Estuary Advisory Council (NEAC) meeting
Wednesday, January 30, 2013, 10:00
Harte Research Institute
Texas A&M – Corpus Christi

Minutes

Members Present: Chris Loft, Chair; John Adams; Ray Allen; Tom Ballou; Paul Carangelo; Teresa Carillo; Rocky Freund; Gus Gonzalez; Paul Orser; Carola Serrato; Ruben Solis; Pat Suter; James Tolan; Wes Tunnell; Kate Zultner.

Call to order and introductions

NEAC chairman Chris Loft introduced himself and called the meeting to order. The NEAC members and alternates introduced themselves.

Review of NEAC membership

The Chair and current members reviewed the NEAC membership list, discussing vacancies by interest group represented and who might fill them. The members agreed to appoint Paul Orser, representing Private Citizens, as a NEAC member. Members also identified alternates if known. It was agreed that the Save Lake Corpus Christi spot remain vacant. Efforts will be made to confirm membership related to other vacancies. Members will take up and review NEAC membership at the next meeting.

Brief discussion of NEAC and BBASC as separate entities

Some members had questioned whether the NEAC and Nueces Senate Bill 3/environmental flows (SB3) Stakeholder Committee, BBASC, would need to continue as separate entities. Per a provision in SB3 the NEAC, with expanded membership to include representation from additional interest groups, formed the bulk of the BBASC membership. Chair Chris Loft explained that as each group has a separate, although similar, charge the NEAC and BBASC are considered separate entities. In discussion with Todd Chenoweth, TCEQ, he explained that SB3 recommendations to the TCEQ would only apply to new water rights.

Nueces BBASC Work Plan Path Forward – Tom Ballou

Member Tom Ballou provided an overview of the Work Plan for Adaptive Management developed by the Nueces SB3 BBASC. The members discussed who would implement the projects identified in the work plan and where funding would come from. Todd Chenoweth noted that the Texas Science Advisory Committee (SAC) had made recommendations to the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG), groups established by SB3, but that the EFAG had provided no guidance on who will implement work plan items. He explained that hopefully the legislature will clarify who will take this lead. After discussion the group agreed to form a subcommittee to explore and advise where funding for work plan items will come from. Subcommittee members included members Jim Tolan, Pat Suter, Teresa Carillo, John Adams, Tom Ballou – subcommittee chair, Ruben Solis, Paul Carangelo, Rocky Freund, Ray Allen, and alternates Jace Tunnell, and Brent Clayton.

SMART Inflow Management Study and Agreed Order Monthly Targets and Water Banking Efforts

Jace Tunnell, Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (CBBEP), gave a presentation on the Salinity Monitoring and Real Time Inflow Management program (SMART) which has been identified in the Nueces BBASC Work Plan as a top tier priority. He explained that the program provided real-time salinity monitors in the bay and delta to determine conditions as a trigger to know how much freshwater inflow is needed to maintain salinity. SMART Inflow Management looks to manage salinity conditions in the bay and delta rather than through monthly target volumes of water being sent to the bay, creates a salinity gradient from fresh to salt during key seasons and reduces extreme salinities during key times of the year. Monitoring real time salinities can determine whether water needs to be passed or banked. Water banking efforts are a part of this program. The members discussed the concept of water banking and banking efforts that have recently occurred. The members agreed that there are further issues to address, including evaporation and a better understanding of the relationships between salinity and fish/shellfish abundance. This latter item is identified as priority #5 in the Nueces BBASC Work Plan.

City of Corpus Christi Drought Contingency

Member Gus Gonzalez explained that currently the City of Corpus Christi is revising their drought contingency plan and conservation plan to bring clarity and put teeth in conservation programs. The drought contingency plans are temporary but necessary in these dry times.

Discussion of Nueces BBASC's Environmental Flow Standards and Strategies Recommendations Report

Con Mims, Nueces River Authority and Chair of the Nueces SB3 BBASC, provided an overview of SB3 and the environmental flow recommendations developed by the BBASC. He explained that SB3 provided a process for establishing instream flows and freshwater inflows to maintain a sound ecological environment in the Nueces River and Corpus Christi and Baffin Bays system. The purpose of the program was to provide TCEQ with recommendations to be used in water rights permitting activities. The recommendations of the Nueces BBASC and Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (BBEST) can be found at the following link:

http://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/water_rights/eflows/nueces-river-and-corpus-christi-and-baffin-bays-stakeholder-committee-and-expert-science-team

Other items identified by NEAC members

No other items were introduced at this time.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the NEAC is tentatively scheduled for April 3, 2013 (later changed to April 23, 2013).

Adjourn